(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to provide low budget hotels to the tourists?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) There is shortage of budget hotel accommodation in the whole country and in particular in Delhi. However, Ministry of Tourism has asked all the State Governments and other land owning agencies including Indian Railways to allocate land for building hotels especially in the budget category. They have also been advised to follow investor friendly land policies, adopt single window approach for promoting hotel projects, allot sites on revenue sharing basis, grant extra FAR/ FSI for hotels, permit extra commercial usage in the hotels etc. so that Budget Hotels are promoted. Further, in order to increase the number of rooms in the budget category, Ministry of Tourism has floated schemes for the approval of Guest Houses and Incredible India Bed and Breakfast Establishments.

Travel awards

265. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has been declared the travellers' favourite country because of its rich culture, variety of attractions and value for money and topped the list as per 2007 Conde Nast Traveller Readers' Travel Awards and India scored above 89 points in all the ten criteria with its best features being culture;

(b) if so, whether Government have felt a need of having coordination with the States that will assist to draw a comprehensive, State-wise, region-wise and national plans and unlock India's optimum tourism potential; and

(c) what concrete steps Government propose to take to further improve the tourism potential?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In the formulation of policy and programmes for development of tourism at national and regional levels in the country, inputs from States/UTs are appropriately used. The Government also supports the initiatives of the State/UT Governments by providing Central Financial Assistance for development of infrastructure and facilities at tourist centres, in preparation of perspective plans for short-term and long-term development of tourism in States/UTs, etc.

(c) The steps being taken by the Government to further improve the tourism potential include:

- Development of tourism infrastructure at tourist sites with the cooperation of other Ministries/Departments and State/UT Governments;
- Focusing on growth of hotel infrastructure particularly budget hotels;
- Enhancing connectivity through augmentation of air capacity and improving road infrastructure to major tourist attractions;
- Direct approach to the consumers through Electronic and Print media through the "Incredible India" campaign;
- Creation of World Class Collaterals;
- Direct co-operative marketing with the airlines, tour operators and wholesalers overseas;
- According greater focus in the emerging markets particularly in the region of China, North East Asia and South East Asia;

- Participation in Trade Fairs and Exhibitions;
- Optimizing the PR and Publicity;
- Use of Internet and web marketing;
- Generating Tourist Publications; and
- Re-inforced hospitality programmes including grant of air passages to invite the media personnel and tour operators on familiarization tour to India to get first hand knowledge on various tourism products.

Tea Tourism Circuit Development Plan

266. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received a request from State Government of West Bengal to sanction fund for Tea Tourism Circuit Development Plan of North Bengal; and

(b) if so, the response of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A project 'Integrated Development of Tea Tourism Circuit in North Bengal' for Rs. 715.85 lakh was sanctioned in the financial year 2006-2007.

Promotion of tourism

267. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether in a bid to develop infrastructure in States to promote tourism, the Centre has sanctioned Rs. 70 crore for 27 projects in the first four months of this financial year;

(b) whether the Ministry proposes "to continue supporting" creation of world class infrastructure in the country through its assistance to various States and the Union Territories;

(c) if so, what are the States that have been so far granting this aid; and

(d) what are the places which are being developed in these States?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (d) During the current financial year 2007-08, the Ministry of Tourism has relased Rs. 294.50 crore for 126 projects (upto October, 2007) to State Governments and Union Territory Administrations for development and creation of infrastructure at tourist destinations/circuits.

The details of the funds released for the projects to the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations is given in enclosed Statement (*See* below).

Statement

Details of funds released for the projects to State Governments/UTA

(Rs.in lakh)

Sl. No.	Name of the Project	Amount Released
1	2	3
Andhra Pradesh		
1.	Development of Kolleru Lake in West Godavari Distt.	358.09
2.	Horsely Hills in Chittoor District, A.P.	207.82
	Total	**565.91**